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UNCLAS HARARE 001992

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/PDPA FOR DALTON, MITCHELL AND SIMS  
AF FOR RAYNOR  
NSC FOR JENDAYI FRAZER  
LONDON FOR GURNEY  
PARIS FOR NEARY  
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SUBJECT: MEDIA REPORT "ZIM'S JUDICIARY INDEPENDENT" -  
HERALD; HARARE

11. Under headline "Zim's judiciary independent" the government-controlled daily "The Herald" (circulation 50 - 70,000) dedicated its September 27 editorial to declaring that that local judges "fit the bill of an independent judiciary." The editorial is in response to an outpouring of criticism against the country's judges and justice system that is being looked at as being partisan. Excerpts:

12. "For the past three or so years the country's judges and justice system have come under attack from some self-appointed paragons of virtue both at home and abroad. Their crime: Not defending the property rights of former white commercial farmers and failing to assist the opposition MDC and its web of NGOs, media houses and other activists to dislodge President Mugabe and his ruling ZANU PF government from power. Judges appointed over the past three years have been ridiculed and their reputation as judicial officers maligned for accepting appointments to replace former white judges. . . Their critics argue that the independence of the judiciary was compromised when the white judges, who had made it their mission to defend the property rights of their kith and kin and to dislodge the ruling ZANU PF from power, were forced to leave the bench. However, when some of the new judges ruled against the ruling ZANU PF government they were hailed as 'independent' even though some of them were former ZANU PF freedom fighters. . . It is important to note that the integrity of our justice system is not derived from what the international community says about it but what the people of Zimbabwe want it to be. . . In our view, our judges fit the bill of an independent judiciary and should never feel intimidated or inferior to those who believe their integrity comes from aligning themselves to foreign interests. . . ."

SULLIVAN